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**J**ust as the "useful idiots" (Lenin's phrase) in our national media have fallen head-over-heels in love with the Kremlin's top thug, Mikhail Gorbachev, many of these same folks also seem to have the hots for Eduard Amvrosievich Shevardnadze, the Soviet's new foreign minister, who will meet today with President Reagan.

*Time* magazine sees Mr. S. as a man whose tone is "quiet and moderate," a man who made his mark with "incorruptibility and a flair for public relations."

*The New York Times* sees him as "a popular figure in Georgia" (?) who has "elegant manners" and is expected to bring "a touch of style and ethnic diversity to Soviet foreign affairs." *The Times* says other foreign ministers have found him to have shown "the affability and charm that are believed to have been considered one of the qualifications of his job."

And *Times* foreign affairs columnist Flora Lewis is smitten by Mr. S's "rosy round face" and his "willingness to smile and banter."

*The Washington Post* sees Mr. S. as "unpretentious" (his wife "used to take the bus to work") and a person who appears to help "introduce a new note of personal amiability to superpower relations." *The Post* quotes a Western diplomat as saying about him: "He is not sour, he has a jovial face, and he would seem not averse to enjoying life." And *The Post* quotes Jerry Hough, a so-called Soviet specialist at the Brookings Institution, as saying that Mr. S's speeches show "a nice, light style" with "a touch of humor."

Well, now. As you may have anti-

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# The other side of Mr. Shevardnadze



Eduard Shevardnadze

pated, there is another side to Mr. S.:

- A Radio Liberty research report this past July, citing *samizdat* documents reaching the West in 1975, says that Mr. S. — when he was minister of internal affairs in the Republic of Georgia — "personally authorized" the torture of people detained in Georgian prisons. This charge was made in connection with a specific feature of Soviet prisons, the "pressure cells," or cells where specially selected prisoners beat up

and torture other prisoners on the instructions of MVD and KGB investigators, the object being to extort depositions advantageous to the prosecution.

In one of these documents, one of these "pressure cells" in Georgia — under the control of Mr. S. — is described as "a slaughterhouse" and "a place for the MVD hangmen's orgies" where "the most horrible tortures were used: beating with iron bars, prodding with steel needles and rods, hanging up by the feet, burning parts of the body with lighted cigarettes, holding under a hot shower, homosexual rape, and so on."

Ah yes, the charm and affability of Mr. S.

- A popular figure in Georgia? Not exactly. In his new book *Klass: How Russians Really Live*, (St. Martin's Press), former *Christian Science Monitor* Moscow bureau chief David Willis tells of a time in 1978 in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, when thousands of people crowded the street to protest a new draft constitution for Georgia which left out a clause affirming the status of Georgian as an official republic language. When Mr. S. appeared on a balcony and addressed the protesters as "my children," the crowd shouted back: "We are not your children!"

- Eric Blitz, the Soviet case coordinator for Amnesty International's

Adoption Group 167, says of Mr. S. that he "presided over a ruthless crackdown on Georgian nationalists struggling for survival of the language, culture, and traditions of the ethnic group to which Mr. S. himself belongs."

Mr. Blitz says that one victim of this crackdown was Zakhary K. Lashkarashvili, who was sentenced in March last year to five years' hard labor and two years' internal exile on a charge of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." His crime was distributing leaflets protesting the government's plan to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Treaty of Georgievsk, which led to the annexation of Georgia by Czarist Russia.

And Mr. S. — presumably in one of those talks demonstrating his "nice, light style" and "a touch of humor" — told the 25th Congress of the Georgian Communist Party that "for us Georgians the sun rises not in the east but in the north, in Russia." He has also observed, in emphasizing the need to master the Russian language, that Russian is "the language of brotherhood of all the peoples of the U.S.S.R., the lan-

guage of October, the language of Lenin."

And despite this, Mr. S., with a straight face, has called the campaign of so-called Russification a "fabricated theory" designed to inflame nationalist and religious feelings.

• Peter Reddaway, a senior lecturer in political science at the London School of Economics, points out: "Georgia is the home of an ancient Christian civilization that has survived numerous invasions by Persians, Mongols, Arabs, and Turks over the past two millennia." But in 1975, under Mr. S's iron-fisted rule, the Georgian Commission for the Inculcation of New Traditions and Customs was founded, the purpose of which was to replace traditional religious festivals and ceremonies and other "harmful survivals of the past" with secular equivalents more in harmony with Communist ideology.

Reporting on the materials published by the 1982 Thirty-Second Congress of the Komsomol of Georgia, Elizabeth Fuller of Radio Liberty says the "most serious concern" expressed by Communist Party officials "had to do with the emergence of religious and nationalist trends among young people,

especially students, and with what were construed to be attempts by various persons to mobilize the opinion of youth, especially students, against authorities." Miss Fuller also says that *samizdat* materials received from Georgia in 1982 "chronicle an increase in repressive measures against Georgian clergy and believers."

• In May this year, in a statement released to the press in Boston, four American musicians told of their "harassment, detention, and interrogation" by Soviet officials when they visited the Soviet Union and played with the Phantom Orchestra, a group including Georgians and Jewish "refuseniks," people who have been denied exit visas to move to Israel. In this statement, the Americans say:

"The Gudava brothers, two observant Catholics in this orchestra, are now in grave danger. They have experienced harrowing prison terms because of trumped-up charges of black-marketeering. Their elderly mother has been severely beaten; their apartment has been searched and many possessions confiscated. They are currently under constant surveillance and are expecting to

receive even more severe treatment."

And an excerpt from the "documentary novel" titled *Criminals: The Story of One Soviet Family* — written by the brothers Gudava and their mother and smuggled out of the Soviet Union — says:

"There are no words to describe our suffering during the long visits to different institutions. . . . the KGB is on our tails. . . . They are shadow-

ing us, bugging our phones, banning travel to Moscow, and cutting off visits to foreigners. . . . KGB officers express their attitudes toward us in these words: 'You are not human beings. There is nothing of the Soviet in you.' . . . It has already been more than six years that our suffering has lasted, and there is no end in sight. Our life is totally at the discretion of the KGB."

They write: "The state found one of the members of the group, 24-year-old Merab Kostava. He was framed and was serving a second four-year term when he died. The authorities claim it was suicide. His mother knows it was not."

Ah yes, Eduard Shevardnadze is, obviously, — as *The New York Times* assures us — a man who will bring "a touch of style and ethnic diversity to Soviet foreign affairs." But then this is what you would expect from a man who ruled what *The Economist* notes is "the homeland both of Stalin and of his last police chief, Lavrenti Beria," a place which, when Stalin's statues vanished from other republics, left many of them standing, and a republic where even when Nikita Khrushchev was in power, "plenty of people in Tbilisi were still prepared to defend Stalin's dreadful record."



Mr. S.: a "popular figure"?